

Message Text

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TAGS: PFOR, VN, US

SUBJECT:U.S.-VIETNAMESE RELATIONS - PRESIDENT'S COMMENTS
MARCH 5, 1977

BELOW IS TEXT OF PRESIDENT'S REMARKS ON PRESIDENTIAL
COMMISSION DURING TELETHON MARCH 5.

BEGIN TEXT.

Q: AND THE SECOND PART OF MY QUESTION, MR. PRESIDENT. WITH
MANY OF OUR YOUNG PEOPLE SO INVOLVED IN THE PAST AND PRE-
SENTLY WITH VIETNAM, I WOULD LIKE TO RESPECTFULLY SUGGEST
THAT POSSIBLY YOU APPOINT A YOUNG PERSON, PREFERABLY A
VIETNAM VETERAN, TO ACCOMPANY THE MISSION HEADED FOR, OR
HEADED BY LEONARD WOODCOCK AND INCLUDING MY STATE'S MOST
DISTINGUISHED MEMBER IN THE SENATE, SENATOR MANSFIELD,
GOING TO VIETNAM IN THE NEAR FUTURE. I BELIEVE THIS WOULD
HELP MANY OF US, MYSELF INCLUDED, WHO FELT HESITANT IN
GOING TO VIETNAM AND WOULD NOW LIKE TO FEEL THAT WE ARE
HELPING REBUILD THAT COUNTRY.

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AND I RESPECTFULLY REQUEST THAT MY NAME BE INCLUDED ON THAT
LIST IF AND WHEN YOU DO DECIDE TO INCLUDE A YOUNG MEMBER.
AND MY WIFE WANTS ME TO BE SURE AND SAY THAT IF YOU'RE

EVER IN BILLINGS, MONT., THAT WE WOULD MORE THAN LIKE TO
HAVE YOU STAY AT OUR HOME.

A: WELL, THAT'S A NICE INVITATION FOR YOU. MY ROOMMATE AT THE NAVAL ACADEMY BACK IN ANCIENT DAYS WAS FROM BUTTE, MONT. HIS NAME WAS BLUE MIDDLETON, AND I HEARD A LOT ABOUT MONTANA FROM HIM. AND OF COURSE, SENATOR MIKE MANSFIELD IS ONE OF THE MOST DISTINGUISHED MEMBERS OF CONGRESS THAT HAS EVER SERVED IN OUR COUNTRY.

THE FIVE MEMBERS WHO WILL GO TO VIETNAM HAVE ALREADY BEEN CHOSEN. AND LEONARD WOODCOCK WILL BE THE CHAIRMAN. AS YOU SAID, MIKE MANSFIELD WILL GO. A WOMAN, MARIAN EDELMAN, WILL ALSO BE ON THE TRIP. AND A PROFESSIONAL DIPLOMAT WILL GO ALONG. AND ALSO ONE MEMBER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES AS WELL. AND, UNFORTUNATELY, WE WON'T HAVE A VETERAN OF THE VIETNAM WAR. I THOUGHT ABOUT THIS, SAM. AND ALSO, I THOUGHT ABOUT SENDING A MEMBER OF AN MIA FAMILY.

Q: RIGHT.

A: BUT MY JUDGMENT WAS THAT WE PROBABLY OUGHT NOT TO GET PEOPLE THERE WHO ARE SO DEEPLY AND EMOTIONALLY INVOLVED IN THE PROCESS. WE'VE BEEN ENCOURAGED SO FAR--NOBODY CAN PREDICT WHAT'S GOING TO HAPPEN IN THE FUTURE--AT THE RESPONSE OF THE VIETNAMESE GOVERNMENT. AND I THINK THEY WANT TO REESTABLISH RELATIONS WITH OUR OWN COUNTRY.

THEY NEED HELP IN EXPLORING FOR OIL, AND IN OTHER WAYS. THEY NEED TO TRADE WITH THE OUTSIDE WORLD AND NOT BE UNCLASSIFIED

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COMPLETELY DEPENDENT UPON THE COMMUNIST COUNTRIES LIKE CHINA AND RUSSIA. AND OF COURSE WE WANT TO GET AN ACCOUNTING FOR THE MORE THAN 2,500 AMERICANS WHO STILL ARE NOT COMPLETELY ACCOUNTED FOR IN VIETNAM.

SO YOU HAVE A GOOD SUGGESTION, BUT I'VE ALREADY CHOSEN FIVE PEOPLE, AND THEY ARE NOW GETTING READY TO GO. THEY WILL ARRIVE IN VIETNAM, IF THE PLANS GO THROUGH, I THINK THE 16TH OF MARCH. SO IT'S WELL UNDER WAY.

Q: GOOD, GOOD. I THINK YOUR PROPOSAL, YOUR COUNTERPOINT TO MINE, WAS WELL TAKEN AND I CAN UNDERSTAND, YOU KNOW, YOUR THINKING BEHIND CHOOSING SOMEONE THAT NECESSARILY ISN'T.

END TEXT.

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